

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 103770

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINR, MY, TH

SUBJECT: EXTERNAL RESEARCH CONTRACT FOR STUDY OF SEPARATISTS
IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

1. DEPARTMENT IS CONSIDERING A PROPOSAL TO FINANCE PART OF
A SIX WEEKS' RESEARCH PROJECT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND BY
PROF. ASTRI SUHRKE OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITY DURING JUNE AND
JULY. SHE WILL BE GOING TO THAILAND TO PURSUE HER OWN
RESEARCH - ON EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AMONG THAI MUSLIMS,
BUT IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROPOSED CONTRACT WOULD ALSO
FOCUS ON THE STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSLIM SEPARA-
TIST MOVEMENT AS WELL AS THE QUESTION OF EXTERNAL CONTACTS
AND SUPPORT. BOTH EA AND INR REGARD THESE QUESTIONS AS
HIGH PRIORITY IN THE LIGHT OF GROWING MIDDLE EAST INTEREST
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PAGE 02 STATE 103770

IN ASIAN MUSLIMS. IN ADDITION TO HER TIME IN SOUTHERN
THAILAND, PROF. SUHRKE PROPOSES TO SPEND A BRIEF PERIOD IN
MALAYSIA, PROBABLY PENANG, KUALA LUMPUR AND KELANTAN,
EXAMINING MALAYSIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE SEPARATISTS.

2. PROF. SUHRKE, A NORWEGIAN CITIZEN MARRIED TO AN
AUSTRALIAN OFFICIAL OF THE IBRD, HAS WORKED IN SOUTHERN

THAILAND BEFORE, IS KNOWN TO SEVERAL THAI OFFICIALS THERE, AND HAS PUBLISHED A NUMBER OF ARTICLES ON THE SEPARATIST PROBLEM. SHE BELIEVES IT WILL BE EASY FOR HER TO RESUME EARLIER CONTACTS AND MAKE NEW ONES. SHE DOES NOT PLAN TO SEEK FORMAL APPROVAL FOR HER RESEARCH PROJECT FROM THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF THAILAND OR THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT SINCE SHE WILL BE IN THE AREA FOR A RATHER BRIEF PERIOD AND HAS NOT DONE SO ON PREVIOUS TRIPS TO SOUTHERN THAILAND. SHE WILL, HOWEVER, BE DISCUSSING IT WITH THAI EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON, AS WELL AS MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS IN BANGKOK. IF QUERIED AS TO SOURCES OF SUPPORT SHE WOULD REPLY THAT SHE HAS SOME US GOVERNMENT FUNDING TO SUPPLEMENT HER UNIVERSITY SUPPORT.

3. DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZES THAT USG FUNDING OF RESEARCH ON SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE SENSITIVITY TO BOTH THE RTG AND GOM COULD BE MISINTERPRETED. WE THEREFORE REQUEST EMBASSIES' REACTIONS TO FOLLOWING QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE PROPOSAL.

--A. DO YOU FORSEE ANY EMBARRASSMENT TO PROF. SUHRKE OR THE EMBASSY FROM THE PROPOSED PROJECT?

--B. DO EMBASSIES BELIEVE IT IS NECESSARY OR ADVISABLE FOR PROF. SUHRKE TO HAVE FORMAL RTG OR GOM APPROVAL FOR HER RESEARCH?

--C. IF US GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT BECOMES CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 STATE 103770

KNOWN MIGHT THIS RAISE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THAI OR MALAYSIAN AUTHORITIES? (FYI PROF. SUHRKE, WHILE PREPARED TO ACKNOWLEDGE USG FUNDING IF PRESSED, FEELS HER RESEARCH WOULD PROCEED MORE EFFECTIVELY IF ATTENTION WERE NOT GENERALLY CALLED TO THE FACT OF STATE SPONSORSHIP.)

--D. SECURITY - DO EMBASSIES SEE ANY THREATS TO PROF. SUHRKE'S PHYSICAL SECURITY I.E. SEPARATISTS, BANDITS, KIDNAPPERS, ETC. IN UNDERTAKING RESEARCH IN MUSLIM AREA? SHE WOULD PROBABLY RESIDE IN EITHER PATTANI OR YALA PROVINCIAL CAPITAL AND COMMUTE PERIODICALLY TO VILLAGES TO INTERVIEW MUSLIM RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND EDUCATORS.

4. IN ADDITION TO ABOVE QUESTIONS, DEPARTMENT WELCOMES ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS EMBASSIES MAY HAVE CONCERNING THE PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT.

5. PROF. SUHRKE WOULD PLAN TO TOUCH BASE WITH EMBASSY AND CONSULATE SONGKLA. ETA'S WILL BE SENT LATER. CHRISTOPHER

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